

“What’s Right and What’s Wrong,” Part 1 - 1 Corinthians 9:1-13 – May 31st, 2015

- Today’s teaching will be part one of a new series I’ve titled, “What’s Right and What’s Wrong.”
- In chapter nine, Paul uses himself as an example to the Corinthians related to giving up their rights to eat meat offered to idols.
- More specifically, Paul asks them to give up their right to this meat, just as he’s given up his apostolic right to financial support.

- It’s interesting to note how that Paul will first argue his own case in his own defense concerning the rights he has as an apostle.
- It seems there were those there in Corinth who doubted the authenticity of Paul’s apostleship, which is why he defends himself.
- This is what we see in verses 1-3, where Paul will commence with his defense as an apostle to the right that he had given up.

1. It’s not always wrong to defend my rights (Verses 1-3)

1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? 2 Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. 3 This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me.

- v1 Paul asks four questions about his being free, being an apostle, seeing Jesus, and their church being the result of his work.
- v2 He tells them even though he may not be an apostle to others, he is to them because of their seal of apostleship in the Lord.
- v3 He goes on to tell them that he will present his defense because of those in Corinth who were sitting in judgment against him.

- What Paul is doing is making a point in order to make a greater point as it relates to giving up that which one has the right to do.
- As such, he deems it necessary in this case to defend himself, especially because of those who did not see him as an apostle.
- This because, as an apostle, he had certain rights, which as we’ll soon see, he of his own volition will forfeit, for good reason.

2. It’s wrong to deny ones rights (Verses 4-6)

4 Don’t we have the right to food and drink? 5 Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas? 6 Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?

- v4 Paul asks them about having the right as an apostle to financial support in order for them to have basic necessities like food.
- v5 He then asks if they have the right to this support for their wives were they to bring them along as others including Peter did.
- v6 In what could be seen as a sanctified sarcasm, Paul asks them if only he and Barnabas have to work to provide their living.

- If you’re anything like me you’ve come to appreciate this about the apostle Paul, such that he isn’t bashful and says it like it is.
- Clearly, the Corinthian’s were wrong to deny Paul and even Barnabas of that which was rightfully due them in terms of a living.
- In other words, both they and even their wives were rightfully to be supported financially by the Corinthian church but were not.

3. It’s wrong to muzzle the ox (Verses 7-10)

7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? 8 Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn’t the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest.

- v7 Paul asks who serves as a soldier at his own expense, or plants a vineyard and doesn’t eat, or tends a flock without drinking.
- v8-9 He then turns to the law quoting Deuteronomy about how they are not to muzzle the ox while it’s treading out the grain.
- v10 He says it’s not for the ox but for them in that whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of partaking.

- Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 25:4, which says “God commanded You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.”
- Here’s why, the grain was broken away from its husk by having an ox repeatedly walk on it and it was usually done in a circle.
- And, it would be cruel to force the ox to repeatedly walk over all that grain and have him muzzled so he could not eat from it.

- There’s something else here that I would like to point out before we move one and it has to do with Paul’s three metaphor’s.
- Notice the first one is a soldier in war, the second is the farmer in the vineyard, and the third is a shepherd tending to his flock.
- Here’s what I’m thinking, it sums up the work of those in ministry. They are soldiers, planters, and shepherds at the same time.

4. It’s wrong if my right hinders the gospel (Verses 11-13)

11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Don’t you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar?

- v11 Paul asks them this, if he’s sown spiritual seed among them, is it too much if he were to reap a material harvest from them?
- v12 He says if others have this right of support shouldn’t they. Then he tells them he won’t because it would hinder the gospel.
- v13 He then asks, don’t they know that those who serve in the temple at the altar get their food from the temple and at the altar.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is Paul gives up his right knowing that it would be a hindrance.
- Actually, this is exactly the point that Paul is driving home; just as he has given up this right, so too should they give up theirs.
- While Paul received support from other churches, as we’ll see next week he didn’t from them because his right would be wrong.